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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000112

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E JAMES LIDDLE
PARIS FOR WALLACE BAIN
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2020

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SUBJECT: CONTROVERSIAL MILITARY FIGURE NAMED NEW FOREIGN
MINISTER

REF: A. ANTANANARIVO 77

[B](#). ANTANANARIVO 97

[C](#). ANTANANARIVO 112

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF DOVIE HOLLAND FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

[1](#). (C) SUMMARY: Vice-Admiral Hyppolite Ramaroson was named Vice Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs on February 24, and sworn in today. He takes over an important ministry at a crucial moment, with AU sanctions looming if the de facto GOM fails to implement the 2009 Maputo/Addis accords (ref c) by March 16. The appointment of yet another senior military figure to the cabinet (which already contains three officers, two of which were active duty at the time of their appointment) has further reinforced the impression that de facto President Andry "TGV" Rajoelina is worried about feeble military support, although personal animosity towards Ramaroson within the armed forces will do little to improve stability. This unilateral appointment sends a strong and negative signal that Rajoelina is intent on ignoring the AU ultimatum and has no intention of forming a true unity government, and makes Rajoelina look weaker than ever atop his fractious ruling coalition. Ramaroson's appointment will not bridge differences within the armed forces, nor will it comfort moderates or opposition politicians who might have hoped that the threat of sanctions would soften Rajoelina's position. END SUMMARY.

[2](#). (C) Following several days of rumors, de facto President Andry "TGV" Rajoelina announced on February 24 that Vice-Admiral Hyppolite Ramaroson would become Vice Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs, replacing Ny Hasina Andriamanjato, who had resigned on February 10 (ref A). After his appointment, Ramaroson stated in the media that "(his) principal mission is to explain to the international community what really happened in Madagascar", resorting to a common tactic among de facto GOM officials. Unwilling to assume responsibility for the coup perpetrated in March 2009 (or even to recognize it as such), he will attempt to "correct" the international community's perception of the facts. This strategy was already deployed to no avail in January and February, when several GOM officials were sent on mission abroad to do just that. It is unlikely that Ramaroson will be any more effective than his predecessor, Andriamanjato, or other experienced HAT advisors such as Norbert Lala Ratsirahonana.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

[3](#). (SBU) Ironically, Vice-Admiral Ramaroson was named president of a military directorate by former President Marc Ravalomanana on March 17, 2009, but, almost certainly under extreme pressure from the putschists, he handed power over to Rajoelina later that same day. He has since generally

remained out of the spotlight, although he accompanied Rajoelina to Article 96 consultations in Brussels in mid-2009, where he tried to convince the EU that Rajoelina's assumption of power had been constitutional and uncoerced. His name was also floated in December 2009 as a possible Prime Minister to replace Eugene Mangalaza, but COL Camille Vital was selected instead. (NOTE: Ramarason is a common last name, and he is not related to the notorious Alain Ramarason, a businessman turned politician who currently heads the HAT defense committee, or any other high-profile Ramarosons currently in government.)

14. (C) Ramarason served as Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Defense in 2004, under Minister of Defense GEN Behajaina Petera. Prior to that, starting in 2002, he worked in the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock as Secretary of State for Fisheries. From 1997 to 2002, Ramarason served as Chief of International Relations and Maritime and Coastal Security advisor at the Ministry of the Armed Forces (later renamed to Ministry of Defense, and then back to Armed Forces in 2009). His boss was General Marcel Ranjeva, who then served as Foreign Minister, until last year. Ranjeva told the Ambassador today that Ramarason's appointment was a mistake reflecting Rajoelina's poor grasp of the situation. While Ranjeva said Ramarason had been responsible for foreign relations within the MOD, he also said that "he knows nothing of diplomacy, and now is no time for OJT."

15. (C) His academic career began at College Saint Michel in Amparibe, followed by Institution Sainte Famille Mahamasina, both in Madagascar. He studied at the Antsirabe Military Academy from 1971 to 1974, then in France at the C.S. Naval

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School of Lanveoc-Poulmic in Brest, France, from 1974 to 1976. He returned to France in 1993-1994, to study at the Interservice Defence College/Ecole Superieure de Guerre in Paris.

16. (C) Ramarason has also studied on USG programs at the College of Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii, the United Defense Institute of International Legal Studies, and the United States Naval Justice School. He has participated in NATO exercises in France, Spain, and Ireland, and also worked on a peace-keeping force in Seychelles. He speaks Malagasy, French, and English.

AN UNLIKELY APPOINTMENT

17. (C) Despite his impressive resume and standing as Madagascar's seniormost active-duty military officer, the de facto Minister of Defense (GEN Noel Rakotonandrasana) and the Army Chief of Staff (GEN Andre Ndriarijoana) consider Ramarason very corrupt, and DAO has linked him to past abuses of power and bribery concerning USG assistance programs. Immediately after Ramarason was handed power in March 2009, both Rakotonandrasana and Ndriarijoana expressed to Ambassador Marquardt their shock and dismay over his appointment, stating angrily that they could not accept him. This reaction precipitated their intervention later that day in, most likely, coercing Ramarason to transfer power to Rajoelina. It is unlikely that their feelings about him have changed, creating a cabinet rift with animosities. (We do not yet have a fix on Ramarason's relationship, if any, with the far-more-junior HAT Prime Minister, Col. Vital.)

18. (C) Rajoelina's motives for appointing Ramarason remain unclear, although there are several lines of reasoning that may have played a role. As Ramarason was Ravalomanana's appointed successor in March 2009, it is possible that Rajoelina may consider his appointment a gesture of openness to the opposition and to the international community. Likewise, it may be a misguided attempt to appease the 200-plus generals sidelined and leap-frogged by the upstart CAPSAT Colonels in March who now run the military. He may consider this a way of neutralizing or appeasing

pro-Ravalomanana officers who could upset the current tenuous peace within the military. Neither of these explanations demonstrate an accurate reading of the situation within the Malagasy military or the position of the international community, but may reflect the sometimes bizarre views of Rajoelina and his advisors. Presidential Chief of Staff Zazah, whom we consider responsible and moderate, told the Ambassador early on February 24 that he had recommended former Ambassador Maxime Zafera for the position; Ramarason's appointment thus shows again the limited influence of the few moderates around Rajoelina.

THE AU DEADLINE: 19 DAYS TILL SANCTIONS

19. (C) COMMENT: With four military officers now holding senior positions in the de facto GOM (Foreign Minister Ramaroson, Prime Minister Vital, Minister of the Environment Calixte, and Minister of Defense Rakotonandrasana), it is clear that Rajoelina is either concerned about a military take-over, or that he is under the thumb of hard-liners and unable to heed moderates even were he so inclined. Indeed, some observers are talking about the ongoing creation of a "stealth" military directorate. However, this appointment will do little to address fractures within the military, given the personal animosity between Ramaroson and current military leadership, and is instead more likely to worsen them. If Rajoelina ignores the March 16 AU deadline for the implementation of the 2009 Maputo/Addis accords, members of his government will face sanctions. Given the unilateral nature of this appointment, it appears that Rajoelina has either decided to take that route, or has lost control over the composition of his government. Finally, the approach of sanctions, if not checked, will increase pressure on some officers within the military to "assume their responsibilities" by taking matters into their own hands. End comment.
MARQUARDT